Nova Scotia

Community SOLAR

Program Guide

Revised August 2025
Version 2

NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia

Community SOLAR Program Guide

Revised June 2025
Version 2

Disclaimer
This guide is intended to assist the public's understanding of the Community Solar Program. In the event of any discrepancy between this guide and the regulations pertaining to the Nova Scotia Community Solar program, the regulations prevail.

Nova Scotia Community Solar Program Guide
Department of Energy
August 2025

ISBN: 978-1-77448-792-1

CONTENTS

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

The Province of Nova Scotia is taking a bold new direction to make our province greener and cleaner. Our province has a goal of supplying 80 per cent of electricity from renewable sources by 2030 while reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 53 per cent below the levels that were emitted in 2005.

The new Community Solar Program will help us reach those goals by making it possible for more people to produce and support solar electricity.

The purpose of this guide is to explain the Community Solar Program and provide information to eligible persons or groups who are interested in becoming project owners, and Nova Scotians who wish to subscribe to those projects.

Snapshot of Nova Scotia's Community Solar Program

Nova Scotia's Community Solar Program Goals:

Add up to 100 megawatts (MW) of clean, renewable solar generation to the grid, helping to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and mitigate climate change.

Extend the benefits of solar generation to those unable to access it.

Support local economic development.

Program Benefits:

More Nova Scotians can use solar energy to power their homes.

Subscribers will see a cost saving.

Communities can get involved in developing renewable energy and addressing climate change.

What Is the Nova Scotia Community Solar Program?

The Nova Scotia Community Solar Program is a way of sharing the benefits of solar energy among multiple participants while supporting local economies and helping the province reach our renewable energy goals.

For an overview, download the What is Nova Scotia's Community Solar Program [PDF].

The program brings together local **project owners** with **solar subscribers**.

Project owners are eligible individuals, businesses, non-profits, and other groups who wish to build, own, and operate a community solar garden to generate clean electricity for participating subscribers.

Project owners can choose to use their solar garden to benefit subscribers from a specific community, group, or geographic area, or they can accept subscribers from the general public.

Want to learn more about becoming a **project owner**?

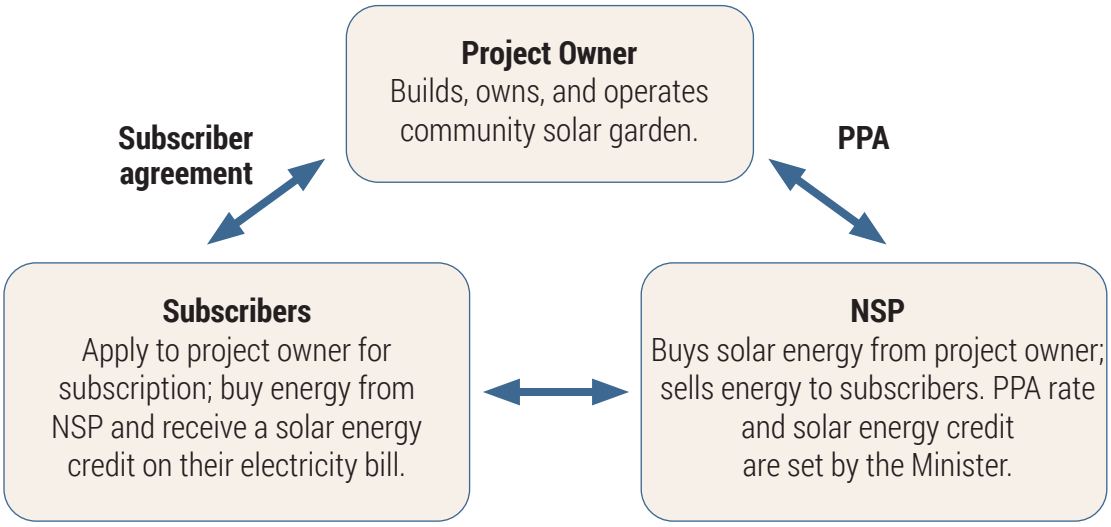
Subscribers are residents and organizations in Nova Scotia who wish to get their electricity from a community solar garden because they

- don't have the right space or conditions to set up their own solar panels
- want to be part of the shift to clean energy
- want to receive a credit for the solar energy that is produced
- want to become a subscriber

How Does the Community Solar Garden Concept Work?

1. Approved project owners build, own, and operate a community solar garden on their land or property. The project owner pays all the costs of the solar garden setup, which includes the equipment, installation, environmental land surveys, and more.
2. The solar garden generates electricity and feeds it into Nova Scotia Power Inc.'s (NSPI) power grid.
3. NSPI pays the project owner for electricity generated from their solar garden at a power purchase rate every month.
4. The project owner solicits and registers subscribers to their solar garden.
5. Subscribers get a credit on their power bill for solar energy produced, lowering the total cost of electricity.

Nova Scotia Community Solar Program



Did You Know?

Solar gardens in the Community Solar Program can generate between 0.5 MWac to 10 MWac of energy.

A 1 MWac solar garden covers four to six acres of land and can generate enough energy to power up to 130 individual homes.

All the solar gardens in the program combined will generate up to 100 MWac. That's enough to power over 10,000 homes.

For more information see How much electricity will a community solar garden generate in Nova Scotia? and How does large-scale solar work?

Who Is Involved in the Program?

The Department of Energy is responsible for the creation and administration of the Community Solar Program. All project applications will be submitted to the Minister for approval.

Nova Scotia Power Inc. (NSPI) is responsible for responding to and analyzing requests to interconnect with the grid, electrical permitting and inspections, and contracting for energy with the project applicant. They will also meter all energy and administer the credits to subscribers and assist in subscription management. Project applicants will need to work with NSPI closely throughout the process. For more details see NSPI's Generation Interconnection Procedures.

How Was the Program Developed?

We developed Nova Scotia's Community Solar Program based on significant research across Canada, the United States, and internationally, along with input from stakeholders and knowledge holders here in Nova Scotia.

Community Solar in the United States

Community solar policies and lessons learned in states such as Minnesota and Massachusetts provided insight into program development.

Minnesota was one of the first states to enable community solar and became an early leader as its program flourished since 2013. As of December 2021, Minnesota had 834 MWac of community solar projects installed across 422 projects[1].

Massachusetts' Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) program began in 2018. As of December 2021, Massachusetts had 674 MWac of community solar installed across 396 projects[2].

Public Collaboration and Input

The program design was informed by significant input from the public through the following engagement and knowledge sharing:

- Engagement sessions held in 2021 by Clean Foundation and One North End, who were contracted by Natural Resources and Renewables for that purpose
- Best practices and learnings from community solar projects in multiple jurisdictions and geographical areas across Canada and internationally
- An online survey that was sent to a cross section of collaborators in March 2023
- One-on-one consultations with multiple collaborators and contributors that have been ongoing since 2021
- Lessons learned from NSPI's pilot Community Solar Garden project in Amherst, and the three community solar gardens in Berwick, Mahone Bay, and Antigonish, owned by the municipal electric utilities

The result is a program that will help us meet our renewable energy targets, while allowing many more Nova Scotians to support clean energy and save money at the same time.

Existing Community Solar Gardens in Nova Scotia

The first community solar garden in Nova Scotia, a 1.8 MWac solar facility, was built by NSPI in Amherst as a pilot project. The lessons learned from operating this project have informed the preparation of the provincial program. The solar garden produces about 2,700 MWh of electricity per year—that's enough to power about 240 homes or 700 battery-powered electric vehicles.

In 2023, the province's municipal electric utilities in the towns of Mahone Bay, Antigonish, and Berwick constructed three community solar gardens, totalling almost 7 MWac.

These examples are outside of the provincial community solar regulations, as per the Electricity Act.

In 2024, Pine Tree Park Estates launched the first project under the Community Solar Program - a 555 kilowatt community solar garden located in Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM). New Dawn, the project owner, offers subscriptions to the solar garden to 29 residential and commercial subscribers.

More Information

Links to additional resources, including relevant acts and legislation, can be found on our webpages:

Clean Electricity (Department of Energy)

Nova Scotia Community Solar Program

[1]Data sourced from "Sharing the Sun Community Solar Project Data (December 2021)," The National Renewable Energy Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy

[2]Data sourced from "Sharing the Sun Community Solar Project Data (December 2021)," The National Renewable Energy Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy

SECTION 2: INFORMATION FOR PROJECT OWNERS

This section provides valuable insights for organizations interested in participating in the Community Solar Program. Project owners are approved eligible groups, organizations, and even individuals who have the right locations and conditions to build, own, and operate a community solar garden. They play a vital role in advancing clean energy within our province. As a project owner, understanding the program's requirements and guidelines is crucial.

Eligibility Requirements

You can apply to become a project owner if you are one of the following:

- Registered not-for-profit
- For-profit entity
- Mi'kmaw band
- Municipality, town, village, or township
- Co-operative
- Community economic development investment fund (CEDIF) Find more information on CEDIF requirements
- University or college —open to universities across the province as outlined in the University Foundations Act as well as Nova Scotia Community College campuses
- Partnership—may be formed between any of the eligible entities listed above

Project owners must currently be registered and in good standing with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies or be able to indicate and confirm legal status (e.g., a university or First Nations band). Find more information on How to register with Registry of Joint Stock Companies.

Meaningful Partnerships

A meaningful partnership can be defined as "an exceptional level of working together characterized by cohesion, coordination, and collaboration, sustained by co-equal responsibility for the long-term health and success of the partnership." Those involved in the partnership are truly *interdependent* and accountable to one another, to ensure the other feels highly *supported*, and can be successful in the work they do both separately and together.

Meaningful partnerships should be formed in any project development partnership. Meaningful partnerships are expected when a project development partnership is created with a legal entity that represents an underserved or marginalized community in Nova Scotia. Meaningful partnerships can have many agreements surrounding shared collaboration, responsibility and decision making. In most cases, a meaningful partnership will include equal or majority ownership and profit-sharing agreement for the project owner representing a marginalized community.

Project Location and Interconnection

Your community solar garden must be located in Nova Scotia in a territory served by NSPI. Community solar projects are either interconnected to the distribution or the transmission system and do not serve a load or connect behind the meter. However, the costs required to connect to the transmission system will likely exceed the financial viability of the project. All projects are subject to local hosting capacity and Nova Scotia Power Inc's Generation Interconnection Procedures (GIP).

Project Size

Project owners can choose to set up a solar garden with a nameplate capacity between 0.5 MWac and 10 MWac. The size of your project will depend on how much physical space you have available, local hosting capacity near site location, your financial resources, and the number of subscribers you want to service.

You can also learn more in this guide: What Size Should You Make Your Community Solar Garden? [PDF]

The total capacity for all projects in the program is 100 MWac. The program reserves 20 MWac for projects under 5 MWac developed and owned by not-for-profits, co-operatives, and/or legal entities representing underserved or marginalized communities.

What Is a Marginalized Community?

A marginalized community can be defined as a group of people who have historically faced oppression and systemic discrimination based on where they live and interact and/or their culture, language, experiences, or common interests/shared goals. Members of a marginalized group have reduced access to resources, opportunities, and services.

A group of people can be marginalized on the basis of factors such as race, ethnicity, sex, gender, ability, age, religion, socioeconomic status, social class, and geographic location.

Groups generally considered to be marginalized include women, people with disabilities, Indigenous people, members of LGBTQIA2S+ communities, and racialized groups.

See definitions and further information on marginalized, underrepresented, and equity-deserving, -seeking, and -denied groups here.

The Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)

The power purchase agreement (PPA) is a contractual agreement between NSPI and the project owner for the sale of solar energy.

As part of your application, you will calculate and propose a rate called a power purchase rate. The power purchase rate will pay you for the net amount of energy your solar garden generates and sends to the grid. Your proposed power purchase rate must consider all of your sources of funding, financing, and the impact (if any) your proposed rate would have on rate payers. All proposed power purchase rates will be a minimum of $0.07 per kilowatt hour (KWh).

If your project is approved, your awarded power purchase rate will be based on the information you submit in your application. Although you will propose a power purchase rate in your application, the Minister of Energy will decide the final rate in the PPA.

The power purchase rate will be your only source of revenue from the solar garden. Your power purchase rate will not change over the course of the agreement (25 years).

Your project may bring in an annual profit, which you are free to use in any way you choose. Some owners may choose to reinvest into additional renewable energy for the community. You could also decide to give profits back to low-income subscribers to subsidize their energy costs.

Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs)

Solar gardens have a unique benefit. They don't produce CO2 like traditional fossil fuel generating facilities, and that means a renewal energy certificate (REC) is issued for every megawatt hour (MWh) of energy generated by the garden. RECs generated by solar projects under this program do not qualify for certification under UL EcoLogo or Green-e Energy Standard. These certification programs require that the renewable energy generated exceed any regulated renewable energy targets. Since the Community Solar Program contributes to Nova Scotia's mandate of 80 per cent of electricity supplied by renewables by 2030, the RECs are ineligible for certification, trade, or sale.

RECs issued under this program will be assigned to NSPI, either as determined by the regulations, or as part of your PPA.

Upon request by a non-residential subscriber, NSPI will register and retire RECs for energy generated by their subscription on their behalf, allowing them to make a verifiable claim of renewable energy usage.

Finding Subscribers

As a project owner, you are responsible for finding and retaining subscribers and managing subscriptions for your solar garden project. At a minimum, your project must have

- at least two subscribers
- 25 per cent of the nameplate capacity subscribed to by residential customers
- at least 85 per cent of the nameplate capacity of the project subscribed to during the term of the PPA, beginning one year after the commercial operation date

The subscribers must be current customers of NSPI in good standing with the utility who are not participating in any other solar programs (such as net metering). You can also be a subscriber of your own project. Other than that, you are free to decide whom you want as subscribers.

Planning Your Community Solar Garden

You will have many topics and issues to consider when planning your solar garden. These range from determining where you will locate it to how you will construct and finance it, as well as understanding how it will affect the environment and nearby communities. This section will guide you through each of these critical aspects.

Planning your project will require consultants and various studies. You may be able to apply for external funding to support preliminary community engagement, readiness and feasibility studies (which may include site selection), as well as preliminary engineering design and geotechnical studies. However, any investment you make using your own money or external funding before receiving approval from the program is undertaken at your own risk. It does not guarantee eligibility for the program or program approval. For more information on potential sources of funding, refer to Financing and Funding for Community Solar Projects [PDF]

Site Selection, Preliminary Engineering, and Geotechnical Studies

Conducting feasibility studies is an important step in determining the best location and design for your project. Choosing a less-than-ideal site could lead to a number of risks, such as unanticipated costs, discovering that the zoning codes won't allow development, or needing additional environmental approvals due to engineering design changes.

Together, site selection, preliminary engineering, and geotechnical studies help minimize these risks and determine if your project is viable by

- analyzing how your system will work
- assessing the available resources at your site and if it is appropriate for a large-scale solar garden
- recommending a system size and design
- providing a resource assessment estimating your project output
- providing an estimate of the cost of the project

We strongly recommend you hire a qualified engineer and/or consultant who has experience working with large-scale solar and is familiar with the unique characteristics of Nova Scotia's geography to conduct your feasibility studies.

Contact Solar Nova Scotia for information on qualified consultants and developers.

Consider the following when choosing your site:

- Your site includes the land you are using, as well as the generating facility, interconnection facilities, and roads.
- Each project can have only one interconnection point.
- The site can be on your own private land, leased land, or, where permitted, provincial Crown land. Learn more about Crown lands and the province's 20 per cent land protection strategy.
- Preference is given to projects located on sites that are less desirable or less likely to be used for any other purpose, such as industrial rooftops, brownfields, and non-arable agricultural lands.
- Smaller projects with different owners can be co-located on the same site. However, if two community-based organizations want to co-locate on the same site, we would prefer they form a partnership for a larger project.
- Project owners must consider ecological, environmental, and archaeological impacts of the project site. Refer to each respective section for more information.
- Access to the local distribution system, including easements for utility equipment.

A brownfield is an abandoned, vacant, derelict, or underutilized commercial or industrial property where past actions have resulted in actual or perceived contamination and where there is an active potential for redevelopment. More information can be found here: Home - Canadian Brownfields Network; Nova Scotia Brownfield Roadmaps 2021.

NSPI Generation Interconnection Procedures

All projects are required to go through NSPI's Generation Interconnection Procedures (GIP). These are the processes and studies that will tell you if your project is able to connect with the grid at the site you have selected, and if there are any required upgrades. Details on the processes, along with application forms can be found here. The next section provides an overview of the procedures.

The GIP is consists of two processes, the Transmission Interconnection Procedures (Standard Generation Interconnection Procedure (SGIP)) and the Distribution Generator Interconnection Procedures (DGIP) depending on the size of your project. We strongly recommend that you size your project to meet the hosting capacity for distribution interconnection.

Nova Scotia Power (NSPI) has created a Distribution Hosting Capacity Interactive Map to help you understand where solar energy projects might be a good fit on the power grid. The map shows how much solar energy each distribution circuit can handle. It doesn't stop you from applying to connect a project anywhere, but it gives helpful guidance on areas that are more likely to support new solar projects without needing major upgrades. It also shows whether power lines are single-phase or three-phase. Community solar projects need three-phase lines.

Areas with only single-phase lines may need more upgrades before a project can connect.

Before you submit an Interconnection Request, check the map. It's meant to give you a general idea and doesn't replace the official Preliminary Assessment (PA) step in the Distribution Generator Interconnection Procedures (DGIP). The map is updated at the start of each study window, following the DGIP Calendar.

If the project's output exceeds the minimum load in the area, a network upgrade and transmission impacts may be expected. To avoid this, it is strongly recommended that projects remain below the distribution hosting capacity limit.

Pre-application Assessment

Project owners have the option of submitting a Pre-application Assessment. This process applies to generators greater than or equal to 101 kW connected to distribution systems rated 26,400 volts and under. It does not form part of the DGIP, but is designed to provide system information that can help in determining the viability of a generation site prior to a formal DGIP application.

The pre-application assessment is a high-level review of the supply substation, distribution zone, and distribution feeder supplying the proposed generation facility site. It includes system peak and minimum load levels, available distribution zone and feeder hosting capacity, feeder type, number of phases, overhead line data, voltage regulation devices, step down transformation, and a system map showing the interconnection location. It also identifies existing generation and other DGIP interconnection requests in the area that are in the Combined T/D Advanced Stage Interconnection Request Queue.

Distribution Generator Interconnection Procedures

Below is a short summary of the DGIP:

1. **Distribution Generator Interconnection Request**

   Once your site selection study is complete, submit an application for an interconnection request to NSPI using the Distribution Generator Interconnection Request Form. For more information, refer to the Distribution Generator Interconnection Procedures (DGIP) document.

2. **Interconnection Preliminary Assessment**

   If your application is deemed valid, you will be assigned an initial queue position. NSPI will proceed with completing a preliminary assessment which will identify any potential adverse system impacts that would result from the interconnection of the generating facility. It will not determine the maximum capacity of generating facility that can be installed at the specified point of interconnection.

   You will receive an order-of-magnitude cost estimate of any required system additions and upgrades to accommodate the generator, and any other useful information to help your project's engineer make a recommendation. It will also demonstrate if there are any transmission impacts expected.
   The preliminary assessment goes along with your site selection study. Together, these two reports will provide you with preliminary information on the feasibility of your project, including the distribution level capacity that is available at the location you are considering.

   Note that this initial assessment by NSPI is not a guarantee you will receive the indicated available capacity at the proposed location for the proposed project.

   NSPI will contact you once the assessment is complete. Based on the information you receive, you have the following options:

   1. Continue with your application to the Community Solar Program for the chosen site. You may choose this option if your Preliminary Assessment shows that there is sufficient distribution hosting capacity at your chosen site, there are no transmission system impacts, and any distribution upgrades are minimal cost and do not have a significant impact on the project budget.
   2. Reduce the size of your project, which requires submitting a new Interconnection Request and completing a Preliminary Assessment for the new project size. All other required documentation such as preliminary engineering and design must be submitted with your application for the reduced project size. If you choose this option, contact communitysolar@nspower.ca to discuss a reduced wait time for receiving your new Preliminary Assessment.

3. Select a new project site. This requires submitting a new Interconnection Request and completing a Preliminary Assessment for the new site. All other required documentation such as preliminary engineering and design must be submitted with your application for the new project site.
4. Do not proceed with an application to the Community Solar Program.

Transmission System Impacts
If transmission system impacts are identified in your Preliminary Assessment, you can choose any of the options listed above, or proceed with a Transmission System Feasibility Study as a part of the Standard Generator Interconnection Procedures (SGIP), which requires paying a $15, 000 deposit.

The feasibility study will provide a high level estimate of expected costs and is required as a part of your application to the Community Solar Program. The feasibility study is not as robust as completing the full System Impact Study (SIS), which cannot be completed until after a project receives Community Solar Program approval.

Proceeding with the feasibility study as a part of the SGIP process is at the risk of the project owner, and does not guarantee program approval.

We strongly recommend that you proceed with the Distribution Generator Impact Procedures (DGIP) if the results of your Preliminary Assessment are favorable to distribution level interconnection. The SGIP for transmission interconnection procedures is a longer process, can result in delays in the study queue and result in project delays. Additionally, transmission system upgrades are likely to be more costly than upgrades to the distribution system.

Questions regarding interconnection processes and procedures can be sent to communitysolar@nspower.ca.

3. Distribution System Impact Study (DSIS)

To be eligible for inclusion in the DSIS stage and advance the initial queue position of the interconnection request, progression milestones described under section 7.2 of the DGIP must be met by the interconnection customer at least 10 business days prior to the DSIS period commencement date. The DSIS process can take +/-12 months, and you must plan for this in your project timeline and construction plan. Check upcoming study period at Calendars | Nova Scotia Power.

A DSIS shall consist of a short circuit analysis, a power flow analysis, voltage drop and flicker studies, protection and set point coordination studies, and grounding reviews, as necessary. NSPI completes the DSIS based on the information provided with the interconnection request, and develops specific interconnection requirements and cost estimates for any required system additions/upgrades. The DSIS is then provided to the interconnection customer (project owner) for review.

Information provided in the DSIS may result in a reduction or increase from the initial estimate in the Preliminary Assessment, and will identify the scope and responsibilities of the Interconnection Customer and NSPI for procurement and installation. Based on the DSIS findings, if the project owner decides to proceed, NSPI and the Interconnection Ccustomer develop the project specific terms of the Standard Small Generator Interconnection Agreement (SSGIA).

4. **Standard Small Generator Interconnection Agreement (SSGIA)**

   The Standard Small Generator Interconnection Agreement (SSGIA) is developed based on the findings from the Distribution System Impact Study (DSIS), with specific terms agreed upon between NSPI and the Interconnection Customer. Once the SSGIA is executed, the customer provides payment for the necessary system additions and upgrades. Engineering, procurement, and construction of the required facilities then begin. Before commercial operation, both NSPI and the Interconnection Customer will conduct or witness the commissioning and testing of the facilities. Finally, NSPI will reconcile the actual interconnection costs, determining any refunds or additional payments needed from the Interconnection Customer.

DGIP Summary Table

Process Stage	Cost	Timeline & Milestones	Additional Notes
1. Interconnection Request	$750 per request	NSPI acknowledges receipt within 5 business days.	
2. Preliminary Assessment		NSPI attempts to complete within 30 days.	Projects may be fast-tracked if no material impact is expected on the distribution system.
3. Distribution System Impact Study (DSIS)	$10,000 refundable deposit	NSPI attempts to complete within 90 calendar days.	NSPI groups studies by zone (clustering) to optimize resource use and timelines.
4. Standard Small Generator Interconnection Agreement (SSGIA)	Final reconciliation of deposit based on actual costs. Depends on project size and location, there may be costs related to system additions and upgrade.	Final agreement required for interconnection.	

Project Plan

As a project owner, you will develop a construction plan that details the activities involved in the construction phase of your community solar garden project.

These activities include

- site preparation
- mounting and array support installation
- solar array installation
- installation inspections and plans review
- risk management, quality assurance, and control
- commissioning

Please refer to the Project Plan Template to learn about projected timelines of constructing a community solar garden. You will be asked to complete and submit the construction plan for your project using the template provided.

Environmental Considerations and Requirements

Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Climate Change does not regulate or approve large-scale solar developments. However, as a project owner, you will need to consider the environmental impacts your project could have and follow relevant legislation and regulations outlined in the Environment Act, and any other standards and guidelines for project activities that take place during construction, operation, and decommissioning.

Use the Role in Solar Farm Developments reference of the Department of Environment and Climate Change to identify if your project requires an Environmental Assessment, as well as other approvals.

Applicants are advised to send an email with a map of your project site and/or the property identification numbers (PIDs) to the Wildlife and Biodiversity Division of the Department of Natural Resources at Biodiversity@novascotia.ca, requesting information and guidance regarding potential species at risk and wildlife impacts.

Impacts to consider include the following:

- Disturbance/land use impacts
- Potential impacts to specially designated areas
- Location of project site in relation to parks and protected areas
- Impacts to soil, water, and air resources
- Impacts to vegetation, wildlife and wildlife habitat, and species at risk
- Impacts to migratory birds due to tree clearing
- Visual, cultural, paleontological impacts
- Socioeconomic and environmental justice impacts
- Potential impacts from hazardous materials
- Regional ecological connectivity

Regional ecological connectivity refers to lands that, due to their location on the landscape and their ecological condition, play a critical role in biodiversity conservation by facilitating the flow of ecological processes and native species (terrestrial species, birds, bats, aquatic species, etc.) across the landscape, including between relatively intact natural areas and between protected areas. As part of your planning, you should evaluate how your project will impact the regional ecological connectivity.

If you are clearing trees between May 1 and August 15, you should have the area assessed by a professional before clearing starts. Information on nesting periods can be found here: Nesting periods - Canada.ca.

Visit these sites for more information:

- Role in Solar Farm Developments (Department of Environment and Climate Change)
- Wetland_Identification_Checklist.pdf (novascotia.ca)
- Wetlands | Wetlands (novascotia.ca)
- Nova Scotia Parks and Protected Areas System (arcgis.com)

Permits and Approvals

Project owners are responsible to be aware of and acquire the relevant permits, licences, authorizations, and approvals needed for their community solar project. The requirements outlined in this document are based in legislation, regulations, policies, and guidelines as well as government priorities and strategic directions. These are amended from time to time, and you are strongly encouraged to confirm requirements with respective offices and departments.

This section provides information about common permits and approvals required for community solar projects. For more information, please refer to the Provincial and Federal Permits and Approvals Resource, and websites of respective offices and agencies for more information.

Land ownership and right of access: You are required to state whether you own the project location or whether you rent, lease, or require access to provincial, federal, or reserve land. If you require the use of any land you do not own, including accessing the land between your project and the NSPI distribution site, you must provide evidence that you have permission to access the land, including the necessary leases, permits, licences, etc. If you intend to site your project on Crown land, you must acquire necessary permits and provide the proof of purchase or access with your Community Solar Project application. For more information, visit Applications to Use Crown Land, Sell or Donate Land to the Province | novascotia.ca.

Indicate if the land has been leased for the lifetime of the project, or if the municipality has secured an option on the land.

Land use and other requirements from municipalities and local authorities: You must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the municipal by-laws that apply to your project and a commitment to comply with them. These could include land use by-laws, public engagement requirements, environmental effects, road access and traffic management, municipal services connections (water, fire hydrants etc.), landscaping, emergency management procedures, easements or restrictive covenants, rehabilitation of any temporary disturbance, building code permits, and licences. Contact local authorities where your project is located for more information and to obtain information and permits.

Did you know?

As an interconnection customer, you have to provide NSPI with proof of land ownership or access, such as licenses, rights of way, or easements, that are needed to allow the distribution provider to build, operate, maintain, repair, test, inspect, replace or remove facilities and equipment related to interconnection processes.

Work permit for roads and trail construction, including water crossings: You must consult with the Nova Scotia Department of Public Works to ensure that surrounding infrastructure (roads, bridges, etc.) is able to support the weight and size of the technology when in transport. Further discussions between project owners and Public Works may be necessary if a project is located near highways, railways, or other significant infrastructure. For more information, visit Permits, Approvals and Licences|novascotia.ca.

Archaeology permits/consideration of archaeological and heritage resources: The Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage offers an environmental screening process that examines archaeological, paleontological, flora and fauna resources in the area, as well as cemeteries and shipwrecks (where appropriate). This process will identify whether cultural and/or heritage resources may be impacted by your renewable electricity project. If you are unsure whether the screening process is necessary, you can forward project plans to the Department of Communities, Culture, and Heritage and receive advice on whether a screening is recommended. If an environmental screening is completed for your project, you will need to provide a summary of the screening assessment, including any identified issues and how you will mitigate them.

An archaeological resource impact assessment and heritage research permit may be required for projects that have the potential to impact archaeological resources in Nova Scotia. If your project requires a resource impact assessment or heritage research permit due to archaeological or heritage resources that may be affected by your project, you will need to provide a summary of any impacts on your project, including cost and timing implications in your application.

If your project has the potential to impact Mi'kmaw cultural resources, archaeologists are strongly encouraged to engage the Mi'kmaw as part of project planning and implementation.

To apply for a permit and to review the guidelines for the applicable permit, visit Archaeology Permits and Guidelines | Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage (novascotia.ca).

You will be asked to list all permits and approvals obtained or applied for as part of your application.

Financial and Business Planning

The economic viability of your proposed project plays a key role in your application approval. Ensure your project is well-planned and financially sound before you apply.

You will be asked to provide the following in your application:

- A completed financial template outlining
  - projected capital costs of the project, including interconnection costs
  - the amount of, and information on, funding, grants, and tax credits you anticipate receiving, in addition to information about your financial institution and expected borrowing rate
  - your proposed power purchase rate, in $ per kilowatt hour
  - copies of quotes and other documentation confirming your financial projections and proposed PPA rate

Investment Tax Credit

To ensure accurate projections, take time to understand the federal Investment Tax Credit(s) and how they may be applied to your project. Pay attention to eligible and ineligible capitals costs, and requirements for incentive adders such as the prevailing wage incentive.
Clean Technology (CT) Investment Tax Credit (ITC) - Canada.ca

Property Tax Implications for Solar Projects in Nova Scotia

Property taxes for solar installations are assessed by the Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC), which uses the Nova Scotia Assessment Act to determine what parts of a solar installation are taxable as real property.

According to PVSC, solar panels and associated equipment - whether rooftop or ground mounted - are classified as “machinery or equipment” under the Nova Scotia Assessment Act. This classification means that these elements are exempt from property tax assessments. As a result, the assessed value of a property hosting a solar project will only include the land and any permanent outbuildings (such as control rooms or storage buildings), while solar panels and related equipment are excluded from this assessment.

While PVSC establishes the assessed value of the property, the local municipality sets specific tax rates based on these assessments. PVSC offers a property assessment search tool on their website, which allows stakeholders to access property specific assessment values, providing transparency and assisting in initial tax forecasts.

Financing, Sponsorships, and Grants

Planning for your project will require consultants and various studies. We recognize that preparing these pre-project studies may require a financial investment on your part; however, making that investment does not guarantee your project will be approved for the program.

You may be able to apply for and receive external funding for preliminary feasibility studies such as site selection, preliminary engineering and design, geotechnical studies, and community engagement. You may also be able to apply for grants and funding to help with capital costs related to building your project.

Any investment you make of your own money or external funding prior to receiving approval from the program is done at your own risk and does not guarantee eligibility for the program or program approval. See Financing and Funding for Community Solar Projects for more information about potential sources of funding for community solar.

Community Engagement and Support

Having community and public support is important to the success of your project. Find out well in advance if the members of your community support the development of your solar garden. Community engagement can provide vital local knowledge, reduce the risk of challenges and delays, and identify how a project can bring value to a community.

The Community Solar Program application will require you to demonstrate that you have engaged with any Mi'kmaw communities impacted by your project (see more below), and that the public has been consulted.

Your engagement efforts can take many forms, including in-person meetings, video meetings, websites, and more. Make sure you consider accessibility when designing your sessions so persons with disabilities are able to attend, fully participate, and respond. The Canadian Renewable Energy Association's Best Practices for Indigenous and Public Engagement provides helpful guidelines to assist project owners with public engagement.

Nova Scotia has knowledgeable organizations that can help facilitate community engagement. The Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CDENE) can provide assistance and guidance for engaging Acadian communities surrounding your project site. Visit the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity to connect with individuals who can provide guidance with engaging African Nova Scotian communities.

Your application requires evidence of community engagement and support which includes

- a summary, including dates, locations, and formats, of the engagement sessions you held
- a municipal council resolution, or letters and other written evidence
- proof that you responded to any community concerns
- letter(s) of support from community members, groups and organizations
- documentation demonstrating consultations with Mi'kmaq First Nations in the area the project is to be located, such as letters of support from Chief and Council and other community organizations and members
- details of additional equity-deserving populations in the area, such as African Nova Scotian and Acadian communities and evidence of engagement with those communities

Engagement with the Mi'kmaq

Proponents must demonstrate engagement with the Chiefs and councils of the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia communities in proximity to the project site. This may include more than one community.

When engaging with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, we strongly recommend using the approach described in Proponents Guide: The Role of Proponents in Crown Consultation With The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. Hiring a qualified engagement consultant with recent and specific experience consulting and collaborating with Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia is recommended.

You may include details on progress for completing a Mi'kmaq Ecological Knowledge Study (MEKS) in your application for additional consideration during evaluation. A MEKS must be conducted in accordance with the Mi'kmaq Ecological Knowledge Study Protocol.

Community Benefits

Your application will ask you to describe how your project will benefit your prioritized subscriber community, or the province in general.

These benefits include the following:

- Capacity building—how your project will strengthen future renewable energy in the community, including increasing knowledge and skills in the community.
- Benefit agreements—how you will engage subscribers from and direct a portion of your project revenues back to, a particular community, such as low income or equity deserving communities.

- Economic benefits—how your project will create local jobs, benefit local manufacturers, corporations, venders, contractors, consultants, and service companies.
- An equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) plan—how your project will improve the gender balance and increase the diversity within your corporate or organizational structure as well as your broader hiring and supply chains.

Your application will require you to describe how the project will enable equitable access to renewable energy by underserved and marginalized communities.

Subscription Model

Project owners are responsible for

- recruiting subscribers during the term of the PPA
- ensuring NSPI and each subscriber receives a completed subscription agreement
- ensuring that at least 85 per cent of the nameplate capacity of their project is subscribed to during the term of the PPA beginning one year after the commercial operation date

Project owners may choose to delegate subscription management to a third party.

In the application form, you'll need to give a brief overview of the following:

- Your intended subscriber community
- How many subscriptions you plan to make available
- The expected mix of subscriber types (residential, commercial, and industrial)
- The average subscription size in kilowatts (kW)
- Your strategy for engaging subscribers

Prioritized Subscribers

Project owners may choose to prioritize offering subscriptions to a specific group of people or community. Community is defined by those who belong to the community. In some cases, geographic boundaries may apply; in others, it may apply to anyone who feels they are a part of the community defined by the project owner.

For example:

- First Nation or African Nova Scotian community project owners may choose to prioritize offering subscriptions only to people who live in their community or are a member living elsewhere in the province.
- not-for-profits that own affordable living accommodations across the province may choose to prioritize offering subscriptions only to residents of those accommodations.
- co-operatives owned by members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community may choose to prioritize offering subscriptions only to other members of their community.

You can also be general and solicit subscribers from anywhere—subscribers do not have to live near your solar garden.

Determining the Number of Subscriptions

The number of subscriptions your community solar garden can have will be based on the nameplate capacity of your solar garden, how much energy it is expected to produce in one year, and the annual energy usage of your potential subscribers.

See How much electricity will a community solar garden generate in Nova Scotia for additional information on what affects the amount of electricity solar gardens produce.

The following example gives a simplistic view of how much electricity your solar garden could potentially produce in Nova Scotia.

First, start with your project's nameplate capacity. This is the maximum amount of power the solar garden can generate at any moment. In this example, it is 1,000 kWac.

If Nova Scotia had sunshine 24 hours a day for 365 days a year, there would be 8,760 possible hours of sunlight in one year.

As the sun doesn't shine all day, every day, we need to account for the time the garden is producing energy. A project capacity factor (CFac) is used to account for the amount of time each year that the solar garden generates energy. In Nova Scotia, a capacity factor for large solar is estimated to be anywhere between 12 and 18 per cent.

Step 1:
8,760 hours per year x 18% CFac per year = 1,576 hours of expected solar generation each year.

Step 2:
Multiply the number of hours in Step 1 by the nameplate capacity of your solar garden.

1,576 hours x 1,000 kWac = 1,576,000 kWh per year.

This is the amount of energy our example solar garden could generate annually.

Step 3:
Divide the number of kWh we expect the solar garden to generate by the average household electricity use in Nova Scotia (12,000 kWh).

1,576,000 kWh / 12,000 kWh = 131

We see that a 1,000 kWac community solar garden in Nova Scotia could power 131 households each year. So, this garden could potentially support 131 residential subscribers.

The amount of energy your solar garden actually produces depends on many factors and can only be estimated by a qualified engineer or consultant. The actual number of subscribers your solar garden can have depends on how much the solar garden produces and the size of each subscription.

Calculating Solar Credits for Subscribers

Subscribers choose how much of their electricity usage they want to offset with solar. This can range from 10 per cent to 100 per cent.

Each month, they will receive a monthly credit of $0.02/kWh based on the actual amount of energy your solar garden generates and in proportion to their subscription size as a percentage of the solar garden's nameplate capacity.

You do not pay them this credit; NSPI applies it to their bill.

The credit amount is the same for every subscriber, regardless of rate class, and does not change throughout the life of the PPA (25 years).

For example:

If an average monthly bill is $200, with 100 per cent solar offset, the subscription would be 8kW.

A subscription this size is estimated to generate 12,000 kWh.

The annual solar energy credit would $240 (12,000 kWh X $0.02 cents per kWh), or an average of $20 per month.

The solar energy credit is based on the actual energy generated by the solar garden, so it will vary each month based on the season and the weather.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is a process of identifying, analyzing, and evaluating potential risks that could affect the success of a project. In the case of a large-scale solar project, the risks could be related to such things as technical, environmental, or economic factors associated with the development and operation of your solar garden.

Your application will require you to complete a Risk Assessment Template, where you will

- identify potential risks
- assess the likelihood and severity of each risk
- develop mitigation strategies

SECTION 3: SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

Before you start your application, answer these questions:

- Are you a member of one of the **eligible groups**?
- Are you submitting one application per project, per site?
- Is your project site physically located in Nova Scotia?
- Will your project be in the service territory of NSPI and able to be connected to NSPI's electrical system?

If you answer no to any one of these questions, you are not eligible for the Community Solar Program.

Submitting an Application

Go to the Community Solar webpage and download the application form and required templates. You can submit the application form and associated documents by email to sharedsolar@novascotia.ca.

In the event that an application is incomplete or additional information is required, you will be notified within 45 business days after the application is received. You then have 45 business days from the date of the request to supply the requested information to the Department of Energy.

Once a completed application has been submitted, you will not be able to change the information provided. Be sure to carefully review the information provided for accuracy.

Application Outline

The Community Solar Program application contains the following sections:

Section 1: Applicant Information

Section 2: Project Partnership

Section 3: Project Information

Section 4: NSPI Generation Interconnection Procedures (GIP)

Section 5: Project Plan

Section 6: Environmental Considerations and Requirements

Section 7: Permits and Approvals

Section 8: Financial Planning

Section 9: Community Engagement and Support

Section 10: Community Benefits

Section 11: Subscription Model

Section 12: Risk Assessment

Section 13: Final Checklist

Section 14: Affirming Statement

Section 1: Applicant Information

- **Applicant's Legal Name:** The applicant's name is the legal name of the qualifying organization.
- **Business Name:** The business name is the registered name under which the primary applicant is operating or doing business (if different from above).
- **Primary Applicant Eligibility:** Only one group may be selected at this time. Select one of the eligible groups that describes the primary applicant with the largest ownership in the project. Partnership information will be asked later in the application form.
- **Organization Summary:** Provide a summary of your organization's history, mission, vision and values, and communities your organization serves.
- **Represented Community:** If the primary applicant represents a **marginalized community**, provide a description of the community represented.
- **Registry of Joint Stock Companies Number and registration date:** Provide a seven-digit Registry of Joint Stock Companies ID number issued to the primary applicant. If not registered with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies, you will be asked to attach proof of the legal status of your organization. If the applicant is a not-for-profit, you will be asked to provide supporting information about the not-for-profit organization.
- **Organization's Primary Legal Civic Address:** Provide the legal civic address of your organization. and mailing address of organization. Provide the mailing address if different from the legal address.
- **Organization's Primary Contact (Designated Representative):** Your primary contact is your designated representative who will receive communications regarding your application from the department.
- **Organization's Secondary Contact:** Your secondary contact is an individual the organization can contact in case they cannot reach the designated representative.

Section 2: Project Partnership

Complete this section if the project is owned by a partnership of two or more legal entities, or by a corporation created by a partnership between two or more legal entities.

Provide the following information for each partner organization or entity:

- **Partner's Legal Name**
- **Partner's Business Name:** If different from legal name.
- **Partner's Registry of Joint Stock Companies (RJSC) Number and registration date:** Provide a seven- digit Registry of Joint Stock Companies ID number issued to the partner organization. If not registered with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies, you will be asked to attach a proof of legal status of your organization. If the applicant is a not-for-profit, you will be asked to provide supporting information about the not-for-profit organization.
- **Partner Organization's Eligibility:** Select one of the eligible groups that describes the partner organization.
- **Organization Summary:** Provide a summary of your organization's history, mission, vision and values, and communities your organization serves
- **Represented Community:** If the partner represents a marginalized community, provide a description of the community represented.
- **Partnership Structure:** If your project is based on a partnership, describe how ownership is divided, including the percentage of ownership for each legal entity, voting power, and the profit-sharing agreements.

  DOCUMENTS REQUIRED: Provide documentation supporting partnership agreements, memorandum of understanding, or contracts demonstrating compliance with the partnership /ownership structure you have selected as part of your application. If the project is partnered with a not-for-profit, provide detailed information about the not-for-profit organization, including the date it was registered with RJSC, the organization's purpose, the community it serves, and any supporting information outlining the history, mission, vision and values of the organization.
- **Project Owners with Multiple Program Applications:** If any applicants are project owners or partners on more than one application to the Community Solar Program, you will be asked to describe the project and the percentage ownership of each partner on the other application(s).

Section 3: Project Information

Project Proposal

- **Project title:** Provide the title for your project.
- **Project Summary:** Provide a summary of your project, including why the project is needed, its goals, expected results, and your proposed group or community(ies) you intend to benefit from the project.

Project Size

- **Nameplate Capacity:** Provide your project's nameplate capacity in MWdc and MWac.
- **Net Annual Projected Output in MWhac and kWhac:** Your engineer will provide this information in your site selection/resource assessment.

  DOCUMENT REQUIRED: Provide a copy of the resource assessment from your consultant/engineering firm showing the projected net annual specific output, in MWhac and kWhac. The net annual specific output is the projected number of MWh/kWh ac that is expected to be delivered by the project to the grid.

- **Projected Capacity Factor (AC):** A project's capacity factor is a percentage showing the specific output of your project in relation to the installed nameplate capacity. Your engineer can provide you with this information. For more information on capacity factor see How much electricity will a community solar garden generate in Nova Scotia?

Project Site and Design

Note: *You can submit one application per project, per site. You cannot set up multiple small gardens on one site and apply for each as a separate project.*

- **Site Location:** If the location of your project is not the same as the address provided in the applicant information section above, provide the address here.
- **Geographic Coordinates or Property Identification Number:** Provide either the geographic coordinates of your project site location or the Property Identification Number(s) (PID). The project site includes the land you are using, as well as the generating facility, interconnection facilities, and roads.

  DOCUMENT REQUIRED: Provide a GIS photo of your project site.

- **Project Land Area:** Provide a description of the land, including if it is a brownfield or agricultural land, and if so, provide the land classification. Provide the size of the land area, in acres, that will be used for your community solar project.

- **Land Description:** Describe the type of land that your project will be located on. Refer to Canada Land Inventory (CLI) classification as you respond to application questions.
- **Scaled Site Plan Map**

  DOCUMENT REQUIRED: Attach a PDF scaled site plan map showing the project's relation to each of the following:

  - local communities
  - structures and occupied buildings
  - transportation facilities
  - proposed routes of access
  - parks and protected areas
  - wetlands and watercourses

  DOCUMENT REQUIRED: Attach comprehensive feasibility studies conducted for the project and the project site, including but not limited to:

  - Engineering and design renderings specific to your project size, location, configuration and design, panel orientation, mounting style.
  - Site selection studies
  - Geotechnical studies

See the **Site Selection, Preliminary Engineering, and Geotechnical Studies** section for more information.

Section 4: NSPI Generation Interconnection Procedures (GIP)

- **Point of Interconnection:** Provide information on the interconnection zone of your project
- **Transmission System Impacts:** If transmission system impacts are identified in the Preliminary Assessment conducted by NSPI, describe the impacts and how you're going to address them. Refer to Section 2 NSPI Generation Interconnection Procedures for more information.
- **Interconnection Feasibility:** Demonstrate that the site you've chosen is ideal as an interconnection site for your project.
- **Estimated interconnection fee:** Describe the findings of the Order of Magnitude Cost Estimate from the Preliminary Assessment.

  DOCUMENT REQUIRED: Attach a PDF copy of the completed Preliminary Assessment for distribution connected projects from NSPI. If transmission impacts are identified in the Preliminary Assessment, attached a PDF copy of the completed Transmission Feasibility Study from NSPI**.** Refer to **NSPI Generation Interconnection Procedures (GIP)** for more information.

Section 5: Project Plan

- **Planned Construction Start Date for your project.**
- **Planned Construction End Date for your project.**
- **Community Solar Garden Commercial Operation Date.**
- **Project Plan**

  DOCUMENT REQUIRED: Complete the Project Plan Template, and submit it along with your application form.
- **Contractors and Developers:** Provide information about contractors you will work with throughout your project cycle.

Section 6: Environmental Considerations and Requirements

It is your responsibility as a potential project owner to be aware of, apply for, obtain, and demonstrate compliance with any applicable regulatory requirements for your community solar project.

Refer to Environmental Considerations and Requirements in section 2, as well as the Provincial and Federal Permits and Approvals Resource for help completing this section.

Note: *The resource is provided only as a guide. It is the applicant's responsibility to meet all the regulatory requirements for your project.*

In the application, please:

- Describe environmental impacts of your project, decommissioning plan, and Species at Risk considerations.
- Provide details as to why your project does or doesn't require an EA and any contact you have had with ECC regarding an EA or environmental concerns for your project. If an EA has or will be conducted, provide details regarding the process and the outcomes/expected outcomes, timelines etc.

  DOCUMENTS REQUIRED: Attach any information provided from the Wildlife and Biodiversity Division of the Department of Natural Resources (biodiversity@novascotia.ca) listing critical species to be monitored and other concerns on wildlife that may arise from your project, in and around your project site.

Section 7: Permits and Approvals

Using the space in the application form, identify all permits and approvals you obtained or will obtain for your community solar project.

Refer to Permits and Approvals in section 1, as well as the Provincial and Federal Permits and Approvals Resource for help completing this section. ***Note:*** *The resource is provided only as a guide. It is the applicant's responsibility to meet all the regulatory requirements for your project.*

Section 8: Financial Planning

In this section you will provide details of your project costs and proposed power purchase rate, and the financial goals of your project.

Documents Required: Complete the Financial Planning Template, and submit it along with your application form. Include copies of quotes you have received, and any other information supporting your proposed PPA rate, such as pro forma financial documents from your accountant.

Review the **Financial and Business Planning** section for more information.

Section 9: Community Engagement and Support

Provide details of planned and completed engagement activities with the public. This includes engagement with the Mi'kmaq, African Nova Scotian and Acadian communities, and other marginalized or equity-deserving groups and communities. Refer to the sections on **Community Engagement and Support and Engagement with the Mi'kmaq** for additional guidance.

Please ensure your application package includes the following documents:

- **Summary of Engagement Sessions:** Include dates, locations, and formats of all public engagement sessions held.
- **Municipal Support Documentation:** Provide a municipal council resolution, or letters and other written evidence of municipal support.
- **Response to Community Concerns:** If applicable, include documentation showing how you addressed any concerns raised by the community.
- **Letters of Support:** Include letters from community members demonstrating support for the project.
- **Equity-Deserving Populations:** Provide details on additional equity-deserving populations in the area—such as African Nova Scotian and Acadian communities—and evidence of engagement with these groups.

Guidance for Preparing Required Documents

When preparing the documents listed above, please ensure you demonstrate that you have:

- Conducted a variety of activities to enable effective and inclusive dialogue with the general public. Provided opportunities for public comment and feedback prior to submitting your application.
- Showed how the proposal has evolved in response to public input.
- Ensured that the proposed project is not subject to significant local opposition.
- Engaged with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia in the project area
- Included a letter of support from the Chiefs or Councils of Mi'kmaq communities located near the project site or those most likely to be impacted.

DOCUMENTS REQURIED: Submit copies of all documents and letters of support that demonstrate meaningful community engagement and support for your project. This includes evidence of how you responded to feedback or concerns raised during the engagement process.

Section 10: Community Benefits Plan

Describe how your project will deliver benefits to a specific or broad community. For more information about each community benefit category, review the **Community Benefits section**.

Provide details for each of the following sections:

Capacity Building: how your project will strengthen future renewable energy in the community, including increasing knowledge and skills in the community.

- Provide a detailed description of the beneficiaries of the capacity building activities, and details on the timing, cost and execution of the activities, such as workshops, engagement activities, knowledge tools or peer to peer networks;
- Include information on how capacity building activities will directly benefit underserved and marginalized communities increase knowledge and skills to the community
- Provide any additional information such as details for plans to offer dmentoring, apprenticeships, and targeted trainings.

Benefit Agreements: how you will engage subscribers from and direct a portion of your project revenues back toa particular community, such as low income or equity deserving communities. This may include referencing the project's Special Purpose Vehicle partnership agreement and profit sharing model and how it will benefit the intended community.

Economic Benefits: how your project will create local jobs, benefit local manufacturers, corporations, vendos, contractors, consultants, and service companies.

- Include evidence of quotes/engagement with Nova Scotian manufacturers, corporations, vendors, contractors, consultants, and service companies.
- Provide a local development strategy overview, local employment strategy and local supply community overview.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Plan: how your project will improve the gender balance and increase the diversity within your corporate or organizational structure as well as your broader hiring and supply chains. In your response, please describe your organization' practices or policies such as, but not limited to:

- workplace development on equity, diversity, and inclusion;
- corporate or organizational anti-discrimination and anti-racism policies;
- processes for achieving equitable, diverse, and inclusive hiring
- employee benefits, such as parental leave, that support a more diverse workforce
- corporate activities that seek to increase or support diversity in Canada's energy sector, including training for hiring managers and staff
- reduction and removal of barriers to entry into the workforce;
- representation in the workplace and leadership roles

Section 11: Subscription Model

Respond to each question, providing the following information:

- **Your subscribers:** Indicate your targeted or prioritize subscribers group(s) by providing information such as geographic boundary(ies) or community descriptions.
- **Indicate if any of the subscriber groups** identified in the previous question represent an underserved or marginalized community or population in Nova Scotia.
- **Your "warm list":** Identify if you have completed a list of potential subscribers from the community. A warm list should represent at least 10 per cent of the nameplate capacity of the solar garden at time of application.
- **Subscriber types (residential or commercial):** At least 25 per cent of the approved nameplate capacity of the project must be subscribed to by residential customers.

- **Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) registration and retirement by NSPI:** indicate your preference for how non-residential subscription RECs should be treated.
- **Strategy for engaging subscribers:** Explain how you're going to engage subscribers throughout your project.

Section 12: Risk Assessment

DOCUMENT REQUIRED: Using the Risk Assessment Template, identify any issues that may arise throughout the project and how to mitigate them. The template has instructions and examples to help you complete the plan. Be sure to follow the format and guidelines of the template and submit it along with your application form.

Section 13: Final Checklist

DOCUMENT REQUIRED: Use the Final Checklist to confirm that you have completed the application and attached all the supplemental documents. You are required to submit the completed final application checklist with your program application.

Section 14: Affirming Statement

You must affirm that all information provided in the application is true and complete to the best of your knowledge. If any information provided in the application is inaccurate or incomplete, for whatever reason, the department may deny or revoke your approval.

SECTION 4: EVALUATION

Nova Scotia's Community Solar Program application has a rolling intake process, and applications will be reviewed on a first come-first served basis. We will continue to accept applications until we reach program capacity of 100 MWac. However, the Minister reserves the right to close or pause the program to applications at any time.

Evaluation Criteria

Eligible proposals will be assessed using the following table for minimum criteria and using additional scoring indicators to assist the Minister when reviewing applications and approving projects.

Scoring Category	Minimum Criteria	Pass/ Fail	Maximum Points
Application Information			
Applicant is an eligible applicant as per program policies.	Y		N/A
Application is complete and signed.	Y		N/A
Applicant is a community or organization with a mandate to serve equity-deserving group(s) or marginalized community(ies). (E.g. The organization has an equity-centered mandate, and it's reflected in their strategic goals, plans, Board and staff representation, and programming/services they offer to the community)	N	N/A	5
Partnership Information			
Project is a partnership with one or more communities or organizations representing an equity-deserving group or marginalized community.	N	N/A	5
Ownership model is >51% for the community or organization representing an equity-deserving group or marginalized community.	N	N/A	5
Profit sharing model is >51% for the community or organization representing an equity-deserving group or marginalized community.	N	N/A	5

Scoring Category	Minimum Criteria	Pass/ Fail	Maximum Points
Project Information			
Project meets the size requirements as per program regulations.	Y		N/A
Applicant provided clear project goals.	Y		N/A
Project Site			
Land is demonstrated to be suitable for solar construction.	Y		N/A
Land is owned by project applicant or applicant has provided proof of access, including Crown land use/permits.	Y		N/A
Site selection informed by comprehensive feasibility studies (site-selection study, preliminary engineering and design, geotechnical study and preliminary assessment), and completed study results are attached.	Y		N/A
Project site is located on a brownfield, industrial rooftop, or non-arable land.	N	N/A	8
Generation Interconnection Procedures			
Interconnection preliminary assessment (and Transmission System Feasibility Study when applicable) is completed and attached to application.	Y		N/A
Preliminary assessment (and Transmission System Feasibility Study when applicable) is favourable to large-scale solar at the selected site and demonstrates that the solar garden can be interconnected to NSPI's grid.	Y		N/A
Project Plan			
Project plan template is complete and identifies reasonable and actionable project steps and timeline.	Y		N/A
Project plan is well researched and documented.	N	N/A	8

Scoring Category	Minimum Criteria	Pass/ Fail	Maximum Points
Environmental Considerations and Requirements			
Applicant demonstrates an understanding of environmental considerations and requirements.	Y		N/A
Applicant demonstrates a commitment beyond minimum requirements to environmental preservation and mitigation in relation to the project site. (E.g. Applicant thinks through, plans, and implements innovative and effective strategies that significantly exceed minimum requirements, and incorporates environmental management best practices to mitigate any possible negative impacts to the environment surrounding the project site).	N	N/A	5
Applicant demonstrates research, knowledge and understanding of species at risk on or around the site and a plan to comply with regulations and requirements. (E.g. Applicant demonstrates exceptional expertise to ensure compliance with regulations, resulting in positive outcomes for species at risk).	N	N/A	5
Permits and Approvals			
Applicant demonstrates strong understanding of required permits and approvals, and ability to obtain required permits.	Y		N/A
Applicant has obtained preliminary permits and approvals (where possible). (E.g. Applicant demonstrates exceptional expertise to ensure compliance with regulations, resulting in obtaining all relevant permits and approvals).	N	N/A	3

Scoring Category		Minimum Criteria	Pass/ Fail	Maximum Points
Financial Planning				
Applicant has completed the financial planning template.		Y		N/A
Applicant demonstrates strong understanding of financial projections and project viability, and has attached quotes and other supporting documentation to support their financial model.		N	N/A	8
Proposed power purchase rate considers the financial viability of the project, while mitigating cost transfer to rate payers.		N	N/A	5
Applicant demonstrates sound understanding of potential grid upgrades and requirements post DSIS or TSIS. (E.g. Project considers required grid/line upgrade costs in proportion to project size; grid upgrades will benefit nearby population (commercial/residential) through added hosting capacity, reliability/resiliency).		N	N/A	5
Applicant has secured capital funding. (E.g. Applicant provides evidence of efforts to secure capital funding, funding application is in consideration but not yet approved; Applicant provides evidence of secured capital funding).		N	N/A	5
Applicant has secured financing or provides documentation of favourable potential to secure project financing.		N	N/A	3
Community Engagement and Support				
Applicant has completed community engagement activities.		Y		N/A
Applicant demonstrates community support. (E.g. Applicant conducted a wide range of engagement and consultation; provides demonstrated community support and appropriately mitigated any concerns).		N	N/A	5
Applicant demonstrates municipal support. (E.g. letter or letters of support from Municipal Council).		Y		N/A
Applicant has consulted and engaged diverse communities surrounding the project site, including but not limited to:	Mi'kmaw Bands, Chiefs and Councils, and community members	Y		N/A
	African Nova Scotian communities	Y		N/A
	Acadian communities	Y		N/A
Applicant has completed a MEKS		N	N/A	5

Scoring Category		Minimum Criteria	Pass/ Fail	Maximum Points
Community Benefits				
Capacity building	Project demonstrates how it will increase capacity for renewables within the community, including increasing knowledge and skills in the renewable energy sector.	Y		N/A
Benefit agreements	Project owner directing a portion of profits back to a particular community or community organization serving marginalized and equity-deserving populations.	Y		N/A
	Applicant demonstrates how the project will enable equitable access to renewable energy by marginalized and equity-deserving populations.	Y		N/A
Economic benefits	Project demonstrates how it will create local jobs, benefit local manufacturers, corporations, vendors, contractors, consultants, and service companies	Y		N/A
Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)	Project demonstrates EDI initiatives within project owner's organization(s), and/or how the project will inform and enhance EDI initiatives.	Y		N/A
Subscription Model				
Applicant provided a well-planned and actionable subscription model.		Y		N/A
Applicant demonstrates a plan to engage more than 25% of the nameplate capacity from residential subscribers.		N	N/A	5
Applicant has obtained a warm list of subscribers (10% of the project's nameplate capacity in MWac).		Y		N/A
Applicant has obtained a warm list of subscribers (> 10% of the project's nameplate capacity in MWac).		N	N/A	5
Applicant submitted a plan to engage subscribers from marginalized communities.		N	N/A	5

Scoring Category	Minimum Criteria	Pass/ Fail	Maximum Points
Risk Assessment			
Project demonstrates a robust understanding of potential risks.	Y		N/A
Project demonstrates knowledgeable and actionable mitigations for identified risks.	Y		N/A
Final Checklist			
Project owner meets all requirements of the application and final checklist	Y		N/A
Affirming Statement			
Signed by designated representative	Y		N/A
	Pass/Fail/ Incomplete		**100**

Outcome of Evaluation

Submitting an application does not guarantee acceptance in the program. The Minister will approve, reject, or request more information within 45 business days of reviewing your application, and will provide the decision in writing. If you are approved, you will continue with the following requirements.

Completing the Distribution System Impact Study (DSIS)

The following two sections provide guidance on the DSIS process only. More information on NSPI's Generation Interconnection Procedures (GIP) can be found throughout this guide or on their webpage.

If you receive approval from the Department of Energy, you will be required to meet the progression milestones identified by NSPI before a **Distribution System Impact Study (DSIS)** can be conducted. These milestones include providing information required for the DSIS and paying any deposits associated with the process. Refer to the Distribution System Impact Study (DSIS) section for additional information.

After receiving program approval, contact NSPI and request to be placed in the DSIS queue. Your place in the queue will determine when your DSIS/facilities study will be conducted.

NSPI will provide you with the scope and estimated cost of conducting the DSIS/facilities study. After you have reviewed this information and paid the deposit, NSPI will complete the study based, in part, on the information provided with your interconnection request. The DSIS/facilities study will include a detailed analysis of the impact of your project, including identified technical and operational requirements for connecting your project to the NSPI distribution system. The study will list the cost and time estimates for completing the required additions and upgrades.

Standard Small Generator Interconnection Agreement (SSGIA)

Once you have reviewed and accepted the interconnection requirements and associated costs, the project-specific terms of the SSGIA can be developed. Those terms include

- the scope of your project
- inspection, testing, authorization, and right of access
- effective date, term, termination, and disconnection
- cost responsibility, milestones, billing, and payment
- project milestones

Follow Your Plan

You are then expected to continue with construction and operation of your community solar garden, adhering to the act, regulations, the PPA, and this guide, including reporting requirements.

Withdrawal from Program

If you decide to withdraw from the program for any reason, including due to interconnection upgrade costs identified in the system impact study, you must notify the Minister as soon as reasonably possible. Your awarded power purchase rate is not eligible for an increase due to unforeseen circumstances.

If you withdraw from the program, the Minister will request that NSPI revoke your PPA.

SECTION 5: POST-APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PROJECT OWNERS

It is important to familiarize yourself with ongoing requirements for project owners. Refer to section 25 of the Regulations Respecting the Community Solar Program for more information.

The following provides information and guidance regarding ongoing maintenance and reporting.

Community Solar Garden Maintenance

Your solar garden may require repairs and will require regular maintenance. If you do not have the expertise in your organization to conduct maintenance on your system, contact an experienced professional. Create a maintenance schedule based on manuals, design drawings, system specifications, and expert advice. In addition, it is important to understand any warranties that your supplier provides, including terms and conditions.

Educating yourself and understanding these issues will help to ensure your project is built according to agreement.

It is the responsibility of project owner(s) to construct, operate, and maintain the physical infrastructure of the community solar garden during the term of the PPA.

Reporting Requirements

Before the commercial operation date, you must report the following information to the Minister every six months after your project is approved, or within 30 days of the date of a request for the information:

- your progress in putting the project into service
- number of subscribers recruited and how you are recruiting them
- whether there are any issues regarding project execution and mitigation plans
- any other information the Minister may request

After the commercial operation date, you must report the following information to NSPI at least once every two months for the duration of the PPA:

- the number of subscribers to the project and the size of each subscription
- the total amount of the project's approved nameplate capacity, in kilowatts, that is subscribed to
- any other requirements outlined in the regulations

All reports are to be submitted to Community Solar Program email address at sharedsolar@novascotia.ca

Subscription Management

Your community solar project must meet the following requirements during the term of the PPA:

- At least 25 per cent of the approved nameplate capacity of the project must be subscribed to by residential customers
- The project must have at least two subscribers

Annual Subscriber Validation

If you have chosen to prioritize a subscriber group, you must validate your subscription base once a year to ensure all subscribers are within that community. If a subscriber no longer belongs to, or has moved away from, your designated community, it is your responsibility to notify NSPI. NSPI will remove that subscriber from your roster.

Maintaining Subscribers

You are required to achieve and maintain 85 per cent subscribership of the nameplate capacity of your project within one year of your commercial operation date. If you do not reach the 85 per cent mark in one year, your PPA may be revoked, or your power purchase rate may be decreased. The minister will give you 30 days' notice prior to taking any action to give you time to bring your project back into compliance.

NOVA SCOTIA